

IN THIS ISSUE WE HAVE

- * *66th ACA Meeting Agenda on page 13*
- * *13th CFA Summary on pages 14 & 15*
- * *ACA's Visit to AIDS NGOs on page 16*

~ Calendar ~

- The 14th CFA Meeting
on 25 June 2009**
- The 67th ACA Meeting
on 10 July 2009**

66th ACA Meeting Agenda

The 66th ACA meeting will be held on 3 April 2009 (Friday) at 2:30 pm at the DH Conference Room, 21/F Wu Chung House, Wan Chai. There are three main items on the agenda:

- Consultation on Health Sector Response to HIV/AIDS among Men who have Sex with Men – Hong Kong Reflection
- Update on HIV Epidemiology in Hong Kong
- Recommended Principles of Diagnostic HIV Testing

Interested readers may watch for the next issue of the ACA Newsfile for more details.

The 9th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP 9)

The 9th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific will be held in Bali, Indonesia from 9-13 August 2009. The Theme of the 9th ICAAP is "Empowering People, Strengthening Networks" For more than 20 years countries around the world have faced the AIDS epidemic more or less alone. Best practices have been documented to help countries deal with their specific epidemics, but as the world becomes more globalized and country borders become more fluid, interventions that address mobility, migration and global and regional responses become more important.

The empowerment of people – both HIV-positive and HIV-negative vulnerable to HIV – and the strengthening of networks - PLHIV groups, faith-based organizations, communities, governments, regions, sectors, as well as individuals - are important components to addressing this change.

With increased mobility in-country and across borders, nations can no longer expect to work alone in its response to HIV and AIDS.

Regional and international cooperation is needed to address HIV transmission among migrant populations. Strong networks are of utmost importance when countries need effective interventions to halt the epidemic in its tracks.

The 9th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific in Bali in August 2009 aims to address, among others, issues of mobility, migration, as well as gender and people with disabilities in order to empower the people and strengthen networks to effectively respond to AIDS.

Readers may visit the official website at <http://www.icaap9.org> for more information.

A Summary Report of the Thirteenth CFA Meeting held on 24 March 2009

(I) Sharing of International Visitor Leadership Programme on HIV/AIDS Education and Prevention in the United States

Ms Loretta WONG of AIDS Concern reported on and shared her insight and analysis of her visit to the United States under the International Visitor Leadership Programme on HIV/AIDS Education and Prevention from Nov 13 to Dec 4, 2008. She highlighted that many NGOs were adversely affected by the economic downturn. Many people are not covered by health insurance, restricting their access to care and treatment and discouraging early testing. Support services are mainly provided by PHA themselves. There is no national AIDS strategy. NGOs are diverse in their capacity and face challenges from language and racial disparity, religious influences, and lack of trust between government and NGOs. Comparing the AIDS programmes of US and Hong Kong, Ms Wong observed that (i) a coordinated effort in HIV prevention and care was the key; (ii) a strategy for reducing stigma is urgently needed to improve access to prevention and care; (iii) Hong Kong was relatively doing “better” in terms of having its own recommended AIDS strategies and (iv) there was a good foundation of GOs and NGOs collaboration in Hong Kong, which may serve as a model for other countries.

(II) Draft Quality Assurance Guidelines for Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) Services in Outreach Setting

The Forum discussed in detail the draft guidelines prepared by the Working Group under CFA. A section on the principles of VCT would be added, touching on issues such as eligibility, informed consent, confidentiality, compliance with the relevant laws of Hong Kong and professional ethics. There was concern about whether parental consent would be required for young clients aged 12 or under who sought VCT services. It was agreed that service providers should be reminded of their legal liability and ascertain that their insurance policies covered such services. It was also noted that Hong Kong has to comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to ensure that children were not denied access to necessary services. When in doubt, NGOs could refer cases to the Department of Health’s Special Preventive Programme for management. Members concurred that the guidelines should elucidate the minimum physical standards required for performing VCT, principles of infection control pertaining to outreach setting, interpretation of test results using rapid test kits, and key elements in crisis counselling and management. The Working Group would continue the scoping exercise to delineate current service status and training provision and the second draft would be prepared for discussion at the next meeting.

(III)

Needs Assessment

**Survey on
Persons Living with HIV**

The Forum noted the results of the needs assessment survey on persons living with HIV (PLHIV) conducted by “Heart to Heart”, a self-help group formed by HIV patients. The anonymous self-administered questionnaire survey was conducted from February 2008 to May 2008 in Kowloon Bay Integrated Treatment Centre and March 2008 to May 2008 in Special Medical Service of Queen Elizabeth Hospital. 170 completed questionnaires were collected. The findings indicated that PLHIV most needed (i) reliable and high quality medical support services; (ii) information regarding life after infection with HIV, how to deal with the disease, and what support services are available; and (iii) more effort in public education to promote acceptance and to increase understanding of PLHIV. PLHIV of different demographic background, especially female, non-Chinese and newly diagnosed, appeared to have greater unmet needs for services such as clinic escort. 85% of respondents felt that a PLHIV self-help group was needed in Hong Kong. 64% said they would participate in services provided by a PLHIV self-help group and 50% were willing to be volunteers for the group. However, in general, PLHIV preferred non-direct contact rather than face-to-face peer support services. Social activities and support services were needed but not regarded as pressing. The needs of PLHIV may change with time and various reasons; and therefore periodic assessment was recommended.

(IV)

**Report on the Draft Conclusions and Recommendations of WHO WPRO
Technical Consultation on Health Sector Response to HIV/AIDS Among MSM**

The Forum noted the draft conclusions and recommendations reached at The ‘*Consultation on Health Sector Response To HIV/AIDS Among Men Who Have Sex With Men*’ co-organized by the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific (WHO WPRO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Hong Kong Department of Health at Mira Hotel in Hong Kong from 18 to 20 February 2009. Members agreed to discuss the full report after its publication by WHO WPRO.

ACA's Visit to AIDS NGOs ~ 19 March 2009

As arranged by the ACA Secretariat, Prof CN CHEN led the visiting party and met the key figures of Hong Kong AIDS Foundation, AIDS Concern and the CHOICE on the afternoon of 19 March 2009 (Thursday). The purpose of the visit was to let ACA members have a better understanding of HIV prevention services provided by these agencies and to provide an opportunity for them to have a dialogue with their staff and volunteers on their work.

Hong Kong AIDS Foundation



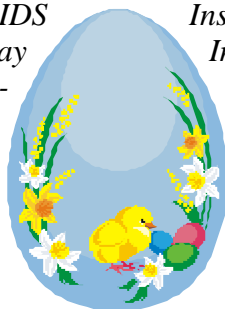
The visiting party was also briefed on the major work of the NGOs visited and had a good understanding on the problems faced by them.

The visiting party included Ms HUI Mei-sheung, Tennessy, Dr CHEN Zhi-wei, Mr TONG Tai-wai, Raphael, MH, Mr WONG Doon-ye, Charles, Miss Nora YAU, and Dr Samuel YU. Staff members of the ACA Secretariat and the Red Ribbon Centre also joined the visiting party.

AIDS Concern



The second round of the visit to Hong Kong University AIDS Institute and Kowloon Bay Integrated Treatment Centre will be held in coming May or June.



CHOICE

